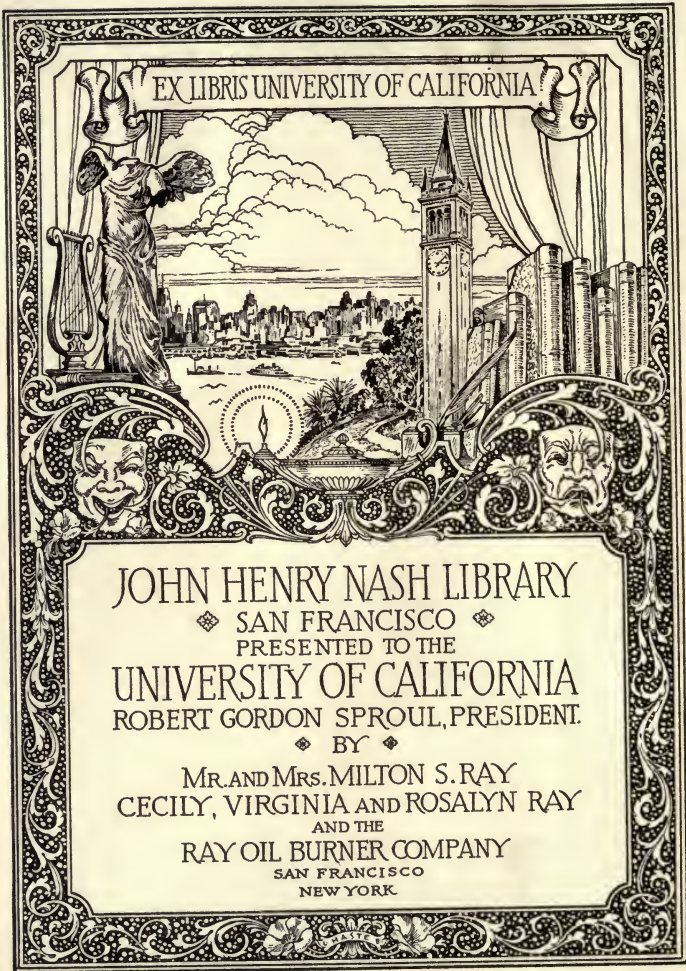


TROLLOPEANA



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Arthur Trollope

TROLLOPEANA

A. EDWARD NEWTON
"OAK KNOLL"
DAYLESFORD, PENNSYLVANIA

TURNING over in what my friend Dr. Johnson would have called the "anfractuositities" of my mind, seeking to discover some personal liking or weakness which I might make into a little paper for my friends at this season, it occurred to me that Anthony Trollope would serve my purpose as well as another.

Not long ago I read an essay which praised him with faint damns: the writer admitted that he was forgotten, and seemed to think that he did not deserve this fate. Now Ned Campion, the bookseller, from whom two generations of readers in Philadelphia have been taking advice in the matter of fiction, had just remarked to me that he had observed a very general awakening of interest in Trollope; that he seemed to be coming into his own again; nor is this surprising when one considers the dearth of really enjoyable fiction.

Admittedly he does not sell like Dickens; it is not so entirely the thing to have him on the shelves as Thackeray, but the reader who has not made Trollope's acquaintance has a treat in store, nor do I know an author who can be reread with greater pleasure.

Nothing is more seductive and dangerous than

prophecy, but one more stupid literary forecast will not greatly increase its bulk, and so I'll venture to say that Dickens and Thackeray aside, Trollope will outlive all the other great novelists of his time. I might, perhaps, except one novel of George Eliot—but wisely will not say which one.

That he will be read when writers like Charles Reade and Bulwer Lytton are forgotten, I feel sure; his characters are real, live men and women, without a trace of caricature or exaggeration. This cannot be said of Dickens, and it is not always true of Thackeray. His humor is delicious and his plots sufficient, although he has told us he never takes any care with them, and aside from his character drawing he will be studied for his lifelike pictures of the upper and middle class English society in the time we have come to speak of as Victorian. All, not one only, of his novels might be called "The Way We Live Now." Someone has said that he is our greatest realist since Fielding; he has been compared with Jane Austin, lacking her purity of style, but dealing with a much larger world. His great charm is his naturalness, his everydayness: some may call it his stupidity, but many love him and I am among the number.

“I do not think it probable that my name will remain among those who in the next century will be known as the writers of English prose fiction:” so wrote Trollope in the concluding chapter of his autobiography, and he adds, “but if it does, that permanency of success will probably rest on the characters of Plantagenet Palliser, Lady Glencora, and the Reverend Mr. Crawley.” Now it is as certain that Trollope is remembered as it is that we are in the next century, but it is not so much for any single character or group of characters, or, indeed, any single book, that he is remembered, as it is for the qualities I have referred to. We may not love the English people, but we all love England; we love to go there and revel in its past, and the England that Trollope described so wonderfully is rapidly passing away; it is going, perhaps, more quickly than the English people themselves know.

To read Trollope is to take a course in modern English history, social history to be sure, but just as important as political, and much more interesting. He has written a whole series of English political novels it is true, but their interest is entirely aside from politics. It may be admitted that there are dreary places in Trollope, as there are dreary

reaches on the lovely Thames, but they can be skipped, and more readily, and who but a fool reads a book through, as my friend Dr. Johnson says.

I may be mistaken, but I fancy we Americans like Trollope better than the English do; perhaps he shows up their faults too clearly. Trollope did not hesitate to "paint the warts," and it is not altogether unpleasant to see the warts—on others. Hawthorne says, "Have you ever read the novels of Anthony Trollope? They precisely suit my taste, solid and substantial, written on the strength of beef and through the inspiration of ale, and just as real as if some giant had hewn a great lump out of the earth and put it under a glass case with all its inhabitants going to their daily business and not suspecting they were being made a show of. . . . It needs an English residence to make them thoroughly comprehensible, but still I should think that human nature would give them success anywhere." This was written in 1860 and could have no reference to "Framley Parsonage," which was Trollope's first great success. Hawthorne must have had in mind "Barchester Towers," "Dr. Thorne," or that lovely book, "The Warden."

I have said that Trollope takes, or appears to

take, no care with his plots: the amazing thing about him is that he sometimes gives his plot away, but this seems to make no difference in the interest of the story. In the dead center of "Can You Forgive Her," Trollope says that you must forgive her if his book is written aright. Lady Mason, in "Orley Farm," confesses to her ancient lover that she is guilty of a crime, but when she comes to be tried for it the interest in her trial is intense; so in Phineas Finn, who is tried for murder, the reader is assured that Phineas is not guilty and that it will come out all right in the end, but this does not in the least detract from the interest of the book. Compare this with Wilkie Collins' "Moonstone," probably the best plot in English fiction. The moment that you know who stole the diamond and how it was stolen the interest is at an end.

I have referred to the trial in "Orley Farm." It is in my judgment the best trial scene in any novel. I made this statement once to a well-read lawyer of my acquaintance and he was inclined to dispute the point and mentioned "Pickwick." I reminded him that I had said the best, not the best known; Bardell against Pickwick is funny,

inimitably funny, never to be forgotten, but burlesque; that the trial of Sidney Carton is heroic romance, but that the trial in "Orley Farm" is real life. The only trial which can be compared to it is Effie Dean's, which I confess is infinitely more pathetic, too much so to be thoroughly enjoyed. It is a marvelous bit of writing; one can see and hear Mr. Furnival with his low voice and transfixing eye; one knows that the witness in his hands is as good as done for, and as for Mr. Chaffanbrass—and did Dickens at his best ever invent a better name—he knew his work was cut out for him and he did it with horrible skill. One sees plainly that the witnesses were trying to tell the truth, but that Chaffanbrass intent on winning his case, would not let them; he was fighting not for truth, but for victory. The side play is excellent, the suppressed excitement in the court room, the judge, the lawyers, are all good: at last Mr. Furnival rises. "Gentlemen of the jury," he said, "I never rose to plead a client's cause with more confidence than I now feel in pleading that of my friend Lady Mason," and after three hours he closes his great speech with this touching bit.

"And now I shall leave my client's case in your

hands. As to the verdict which you will give, I have no apprehension. You know as well as I do that she has not been guilty of this terrible crime. That you will so pronounce I do not for a moment doubt. But I do hope that that verdict will be accompanied by some expression on your part which may show to the world at large how great has been the wickedness displayed in the accusation." And Trollope adds:

"And yet as he sat down he knew that she had been guilty! To his ear her guilt had never been confessed; but yet he knew that it was so, and knowing that, he had been able to speak as though her innocence were a thing of course. That those witnesses had spoken truth he also knew, and yet he had been able to hold them up to the execration of all around them as though they had committed the worst of crimes from the foulest of motives! And more than this, stranger than this, worse than this,—when the legal world knew—as the legal world soon did know—that all this had been so, the legal world found no fault with Mr. Furnival, conceiving that he had done his duty by his client in a manner becoming an English barrister and an English gentleman."

I have heard people frequently say that they would like to attend a trial: it is not worth while; trials are either shocking or stupid, the best way to see a trial is to read "Orley Farm."

Those of us who love Trollope do so for those very qualities which cause fatigue in others: our lives it may be are fairly strenuous, it is hardly necessary for us to have our feelings wrung of an evening. When the day is done and I settle down in my arm chair by the crackling wood fire, I am no longer inclined to problems, real or imaginary. I suppose the average man does his reading with what comfort he may after dinner; it is the time for peace—and Trollope. It may be that the reader falls asleep, what matter, better this, I should say, than that he should be kept awake by the dissection of a human soul: this vivisection business is too painful. No, give me those long descriptions of house parties, those chapters made up of dinner conversations, of endless hunting scenes, of editorials from newspapers, of meetings of the House, of teas on the terrace, and above all, give me the clergy, not in real life for a minute, but in the pages of Trollope. But nothing happens you say. I admit there is very little blood and no

thunder, but not all of us care for blood and thunder. Trollope interests one in a gentler way; in fact, you may not know that you have been interested until you look at your watch and find it past midnight. And you can step from one book to another almost without knowing it. The characters, the situations repeat themselves over and over again; your interest is not always intense but it never entirely flags. You are always saying to yourself, I'll just read one more chapter.

I am told by those who know, that his sporting scenes are faultless; never having found a horse with a neck properly adjusted for me to cling to, I have given up riding; seated in my easy chair, novel in hand, in imagination I thrust my feet into riding boots and hear the click of my spurs on the gravel, as I walk to my mount, for someone has "put me up"; forgetful of my increasing girth, I rather fancy myself in my hunting clothes. Astride my borrowed mount, following a pack of hounds, I am off in the direction of "Trumpeton Wood."

Fox hunting, so fatiguing and disappointing in reality, becomes a delight in the pages of Trollope. The fox "breaks" at last, the usual accident happens, someone misjudges a brook or a fence

and is thrown. If the accident is serious they have a big man down from London; I know just who he will be before he arrives, and when the services of a solicitor or man of business are required, he turns out to be an old friend.

Never having knowingly killed a grouse or a partridge, being utterly unfamiliar with the use of shooting irons of any kind, Trollope makes me long for the first of August that I may tell my man to pack my belongings and take places in the night mail for Scotland.

And then comes the long hoped for invitation to spend a week end at "Matching Priory," or it may be that the Duke's great establishment, "Gatherum Castle," is to be open to me: Dukes and Duchesses, Lords and Ladies, M. P.'s, with the latest news from town of ministries falling and forming, I have been through it all before. I know the company; some friends will delight, others will bore me, I know in advance just what turn the gossip will take

But above all the clergy! Was there ever a more wonderful gallery of portraits—Balzac you will say. I don't know, perhaps, but beginning with the delightful old Warden, his rich, pompous

but very human son-in-law, Archdeacon Grantley, Bishop Proudie and his shrewish Lady and that Uriah Heep of clergyman, Mr. Slope, it is a wonderful assemblage of living men and women leading everyday lives without romance, almost without incident.

Trollope was the painter, perhaps I should say the photographer, par excellence of his time. He set up his camera and took his pictures from every point of view, he probably was not a very great artist, but he was a wonderfully skillful workman. As he says of himself, he was at his writing-table at half past five in the morning, he required of himself 250 words every quarter of an hour, his motto was *nulla dies sine linea*—no wet towel around his brow, he went “doggedly” at it, as Dr. Johnson says, and wrote an enormous number of books for a total of over seventy thousand pounds. He looked upon the result as comfortable but not splendid.

“You are defied to find in Trollope a remark or an action out of keeping with the character concerned. I would give a pound for every such instance found by an objector, if he would give me a penny for every strictly consistent speech or

instance I might find in return." I am quoting from a little book of essays by Street, and it seems to me that he has here put his finger upon one of Trollope's most remarkable qualities: his absolute faithfulness.

Trollope was a realist if I understand the word, but he did not care much to deal with the disagreeable as those we call realists usually do.

His pictures of the clergy, of whom he says when he began to write he really knew very little, delighted some and offended others. Hain Friswell, who was a prig, says they are a disgrace, almost a libel, but the world knows better. On the whole his clergy are a very human lot, with faults and weaknesses just like our own.

To my mind Mrs. Proudie is worthy of Dickens at his very best, there is not a trace of caricature and the description of her reception is one of the funniest chapters ever written—read it and you will agree with me: in another vein, and very delicate, is the treatment of Mrs. Proudie's death. The old Bishop feels a certain amount of grief; his mainstay, his lifelong partner has been taken from him, but he remembers that life with her was not always easy: one feels that he will be consoled.

Trollope tells an amusing story of Mrs. Proudie. He was writing one day at the Athenaeum Club when two clergymen entered the room, each with a novel in his hand, soon they began to abuse what they were reading and it turned out that each was reading one of his novels. Said one, "Here is that Archdeacon whom we have had in every novel he has ever written," "and here," said the other, "is that old Duke whom he talked about till everyone is tired of him. If I could not invent new characters I would not write novels at all." Then one of them fell foul of Mrs. Proudie. It was impossible for them not to be overheard. Trollope got up and standing between them acknowledged himself to be the culprit, and as to Mrs. Proudie, said he, "I'll go home and kill her before the week is out."

"The biographical part of literature is what I love best." After his death in 1882 his son published an autobiography which Trollope had written some years before. Swinburne calls it "exquisitely comical and conscientiously coxcombical"; whatever this may mean, it is generally thought to have harmed his reputation somewhat; be this as it may, I have greatly enjoyed the book.

Personally Trollope was the typical Englishman: look at his portrait. He was dogmatic, self-assertive, rather irritable and hard to control, as his superiors in the Post Office, in which he spent the greater part of his life, well knew; not altogether an amiable character one would say. His education, which was by no means first-class, and his critics have forever been finding fault with his style. It may be that his English is not as Frederick Harrison said it was, pure, bright and graceful, but he was able to use it in a way sufficient for his purpose.

I like the concluding paragraphs especially and have read them more than once.

“It will not, I trust, be supposed by any reader that I have intended in this so-called autobiography to give a record of my inner life. No man ever did so truly—and no man ever will. Rousseau probably attempted it, but who doubts but that Rousseau has confessed in much the thoughts and convictions rather than the facts of his life? If the rustle of a woman’s petticoat has ever stirred my blood; if a cup of wine has been a joy to me; if I have thought tobacco at midnight in pleasant company to be one of the elements of an earthly paradise:

if, now and again, I have somewhat recklessly fluttered a £5 note over a card-table;—of what matter is that to any reader? I have betrayed no woman. Wine has brought me to no sorrow. It has been the companionship of smoking that I have loved, rather than the habit. I have never desired to win money, and I have lost none. To enjoy the excitement of pleasure, but to be free from its vices and ill effects—to have the sweet, and leave the bitter untasted—that has been my study. The preachers tell us that this is impossible. It seems to me that hitherto I have succeeded fairly well. I will not say that I have never scorched a finger—but I carry no ugly wounds.

“For what remains to me of life I trust for my happiness still chiefly to my work—hoping that when the power of work be over with me, God may be pleased to take me from a world in which, according to my view, there can be no joy; secondly to the love of those who love me; and then to my books. That I can read and be happy while I am reading, is a great blessing. Could I remember, as some men do, what I read, I should have been able to call myself an educated man.”

To trust for happiness chiefly to work and books—to taste the sweet and leave the bitter untasted; some may call such a scheme of life commonplace, but the most eventful lives are not the happiest—probably few author's have led happier lives than Anthony Trollope.

There is frequently some question as to the order in which his novels should be read, particularly is this the case in the two groups which have come to be known as the "Barchester," or ecclesiastical series, and the "Parliamentary" series. I don't know that it makes much difference, but it would probably be best to read them in the order of their publication, and to give this little paper a fine bibliographical flavor, I append a list of his books, with the dates of their publication, indicating the Barchester series with a * and the Parliamentary series with a †. The American publishers, Dodd, Mead & Co., are at present bringing out a third series known as the "Manor House" series. These three sets include all of the novels which the most enthusiastic Trollopeian could wish to see upon his shelves.

"OAK KNOLL"

December, 1911

A. E. N.

Names of Works	Date of Publication
The Macdermots of Ballycloran	1847
The Kellys and the O'Kellys	1848
La Vendée	1850
The Warden*	1855
Barchester Towers*	1857
The Three Clerks	1858
Doctor Thorne*	1858
The West Indies and the Spanish Main	1859
The Bertrams	1859
Castle Richmond	1860
Framley Parsonage*	1861
Tales of All Countries—1st Series	1861
“ “ “ “ 2d “	1863
“ “ “ “ 3d “	1870
Orley Farm	1862
North America	1862
Rachel Ray	1863
The Small House at Allington*	1864
Can You Forgive Her? †	1864
Miss Mackenzie	1865
The Belton Estate	1866
The Claverings	1867
The Last Chronicle of Barset*	1867
Nina Balatka	1867

Names of Works	Date of Publication
Linda Tressel	1868
Phineas Finn†	1869
He Knew He Was Right	1869
Brown, Jones and Robinson	1870
The Vicar of Bullhampton	1870
An Editor's Tales	1870
Cæsar (Ancient Classics)	1870
Sir Harry Hotspur of Humblethwaite	1871
Ralph the Heir	1871
The Golden Lion of Granpère	1872
The Eustace Diamonds	1873
Australia and New Zealand	1873
Phineas Redux†	1874
Harry Heathcote of Gangoil	1874
Lady Anna	1874
The Way We Live Now	1875
The Prime Minister†	1876
The American Senator	1877
Is He Popenjoy?	1878
South Africa	1878
John Caldigate	1879
An Eye for an Eye	1879
Cousin Henry	1879
Thackeray	1879

Names of Works	Date of Publication
The Duke's Children†	1880
Life of Cicero	1880
Ayala's Angel	1881
Doctor Wortle's School	1881
Frau Frohmann and Other Stories	1882
Lord Palmerston	1882
The Fixed Period	1882
Kept in the Dark	1882
Marion Fay	1882
Mr. Scarborough's Family	1883
Anthony Trollope, an Autobiography	1883

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